

Title: Interview with Mark Konapelsky

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Interviewer(s): Christian Ottey and Christopher Knorr

Interviewee: Mark Konapelsky

Introduction: Mark Konapelsky is a Crisfield resident who moved into Crisfield in 2005 who came for the views and the people. He talks about how things have changed over his time in Crisfield and how people always talk but nothing ever gets done, and those who do talk out against ideas are ignored. He is hopeful for the future of Crisfield as a small tourist destination, but not a business center.

[Transcription begins]

Christian Ottey (Ottey): Alright, so we're good to start. Today is April 17th, 2025. My name is Christian Ottey, and I'm here with.

Mark Konapelsky (Konapelsky): Mark Konapelsky.

Christopher Knorr (Knorr): And then my name is Christopher Knorr.

Ottey: And yeah, we're just here conducting our interview for our capstone project. So just going to start here with the list of questions we have for you. And this first question is kind of made up of a lot of questions. So, I'll only ask one of them. So how long have you lived in the Crisfield area?

Konapelsky: 20 years.

Ottey: 20 years. Were you born here?

Konapelsky: No, I was born in the Lehigh Valley of Pennsylvania.

Knorr: What has made you or what has changed since you've kind of been in Crisfield your 20 years? Is there any major changes?

Konapelsky: There, well, a lot of the businesses went away, that was the major change that- that I saw. And the other is the lack of infrastructure in Crisfield is not as good as it used to be years ago.

Knorr: What- what made you move to Crisfield? What keeps you in Crisfield?

Konapelsky: We love the people; we love the area. It's a different group of people. It's like a big family down here, back here. And ultimately, to be honest with you, as sad as it is, I lost a part, I lost my parents and my wife lost a child from her first marriage. And I actually wound up going to short places. But it started as a second home for us. And I did it to save her sanity for something to do and the house kind of saved us, the neighbor saved us, and eventually, when the move was right, we just moved out here full time.

Knorr: What kind of memories have you shared since being in Crisfield, I guess? We spoke a little bit to that.

Konapelsky: The people, love the people, I love the waterways, love crabbing, you know, the beaches, going over to Smith Island, you know. We've been- we were opened up to, people took us in as family and just opened up Crisfield to us and, you know, we just even going over people's houses, you know. You get, you know, everyone has boats, so you know who to go to and not to, because some people when you go on their boats, you're stuck all day with them, they don't come back. But it was more or less the thing that we fell in love with, with the love of the people down here and how they are.

Ottey: So, you mentioned you do crabbing?

Konapelsky: Yes.

Ottey: Could you maybe tell us more about that?

Konapelsky: Well, you know, we have a pier, so I go out there, I put my crab pots out, you know, and, you know, it's just, you know, once crabbing season hits, you know, I'm out there every night just grabbing the crab pot and coming back and making crabs. You know, it's been- it's been really good lately. There are a couple years it slugged off, but last year was really good. The year before that was even better and supposedly this year is supposed to be good.

Ottey: So how has the, I guess, the crabbing industry as a whole maybe changed in Crisfield?

Konapelsky: Down the tubes. When I first came here, it was at the end of the 413. There's the depot, which I don't know if you gentlemen have seen it yet, where the boats from Smith Island come in and dock. Right across from that was Bob Evans Crab. They- they used to- it used to be a buyer, we used to and when we first started coming down here, the first couple years we were here. You always saw the crab boats coming in unloading. It was incredibly active. You always saw crabbers coming in any time of the day. And now you don't see anyone come into it. I have- I have, in the last four years, I haven't seen one crabbing boat come up and unload a bushel of crabs on that site. You know, so that whole industry, from what I've seen behind me, the only thing that's going that keeps going right now are the soft shell; we have a lot of soft-shell

hatcheries around us and they're staying pretty active, but even I heard they're being challenged with all of the new environmental regulations and everything and they are kind of getting squeezed out by the government to be honest with you.

Knorr: So, kind of speaking on another part of the waterfront, what kind of role does that play in recreation and social life for you guys in Crisfield?

Konapelsky: It is our social life in the summertime. You know, we have Wellington Beach down at the end of the street, which we're volunteers for that, and we keep that actively going. And we brought that beach back, you know. It wasn't maintained for many years, and now it's a- it's a focal point all summer for everyone in in the county. And we try to get on the water as much as we can with the boats, you know, even just to cruise at night and just do a night cruise but, you know, I love fishing, so, you know, if I'm on someone else's boat or whatever, I'm always throwing a line over the side. So, we're, and actually everyone in Crisfield, you know, all of my neighbors at all- all the activities are around that, you know, like in a couple of weeks, well in a few months, we're gonna have that big yellow duck come back down again. I don't know if you remember that yellow duck.

Ottey: Saw an article about that.

Konapelsky: Yeah, that's gonna be coming down. And the neat thing is we're bringing it down to the beach this year. You know, so that's going to be, you know, really enjoyable. It's a beautiful space there, so you know a lot of that stuff is coming back. You know people are really appreciated the beach when we brought it back and they take- they take care of it, and it's- it's something nice to see all the kids in the water all the time and the parents with them, you know, and they make it a day event which I when I first came down here you didn't see that. Now it's flipping around to the other side where all summer, all you see is families there from the beginning of the day till the end. It's really neat.

Knorr: Would you say it kind of storms and flooding has impacted that in any way?

Konapelsky: Well, you know, one of the problems I had, because I- I- I became a- a state official and a county official, and I actually printed some of this stuff off for you to see it. One of the big problems they have down, and still actively have down at the beach, is this is Small Boat Harbor over here. Are you familiar with this area? This is the American Legion over here, and this is Wellington Beach, okay? If you, oh I don't have it, it's not big enough. Well, they have, this is a housing community here and this is Wellington Beach here. The big problem they have is the beach erosion keeps coming in further and further every year where it's actually encroaching into the parking lot area here. I'll give you this to take with you. But I had, years ago, when I was on the city council, I had a gentleman by the name of Bhaskar. I think he's still there; he's with MDE, an engineer, and that's somebody who you should hook up with. And I had him down there, and they did a study on this area to see, because it was eroding so quickly, I saw

it in years that I've been down here. You could see the erosion taking place and every time we put sand in here, it always gets swept out. The big problem, and it made sense to me, is when they did this development years ago, you didn't have all the regulations and everything you do today, and they put this huge stone jetty coming out here. That changed the whole dynamics of this coastline. And what it did was instead of it just like sifting down it- it stopped it there, which made everything swell into this area. So, the engineers came up with, if they would have- if they would have put a jetty coming out right here to match that, that would take it- that would take it and make it a soup bowl versus an angle bowl. And with that soup bowl, what it would do was- what it would do is stop that whole disintegration of this area and just channel that water straight past it instead of in a storm bringing it in on an angle, because all for the most part comes in on an angle so without the one problem we had is we had them. We had almost the money at the time to put this in and then we were going to get the oyster, some organization where they were going to put spats on it and grow, you know, so it was going to be a functional thing also, but we couldn't get the permits to put it in, so the government permits, because of the cost of them, the length that, the different divisions you have to go through, Core of Engineers, everyone else, MDE and the environmental groups. They never allowed us to just put what was originally put here to fix a simple set, to fix a simple solution. And that's the stupidity you deal with today with all these regulations, these government regulations. Everyone puts these regulations in and they don't pay attention to it, to what's actually happening.

Knorr: So, would you say that, I mean, it sounds like it's kind of made the erosion in the-

Konapelsky: It's speeding it up. It's speeding it up. Ever since they put that in, you could see the erosion further and further like this- this parking lot was actually taking they- they keep building this up because the water came in and took a section of this parking a lot out. It was that bad.

Knorr: I guess that kind of leads into the next question of, outside of maybe that beach, have you noticed any changes in the kind of flooding in Crisfield?

Konapelsky: Yes, definitely and some of the- I'm on all these committees, so I mean I've been studying this stuff since I came down here because I was in Sandy and I got hit hard in Sandy. Because I live, my house is, here's the beach area, okay? I'm right here which is only a block and a half away, so I'm open up to all this seawall activity and our- our street, when you go to Windfall Avenue, Hall Highway near the hospital, those are the first streets that flood and the reason for that is because they never put the new tidal ditches in. They don't take care of the ditches and- and if they would clean out the ditches as- like they're supposed to and put the waterways back in like they were there years ago during the day and the other problem they have is when they put, I'm talking to old timers who are telling me this, because they've always had flooding problems, but not like today. Big problem with Windfall was they used to have- they used to have ditching in the front of the homes so that, you know, when the water came in it was- it was processed back out through the waterway, and you would have a floodgate there so it

would, you know, let it out and not back in. The problem is everyone wanted pretty yards, so they got rid of all of the ditches in the front, which took- took out most of the irrigation areas, and- and even the sewer system in Crisfield is so old that it's not sufficient. I mean, when our street floods, which is probably about 20 to 25 times a year on an average, we lose our toilets. Because the system fills and people don't even think of stuff like that until you have a house and you can't flush your toilet, you know.

Knorr: So, you mentioned one of the reasons why people, or I guess the city like got rid of the ditches was because, you know, they just wanted to make their houses pretty. Were there any other reasons why they got rid some of the infrastructure in Crisfield before?

Konapelsky: Oh yeah, cost. Number one, there were arguments on who's going to maintain the ditching areas. When I was on the city council, they bought that we got a grant to get floodgates. Problem is we need it because of permitting and everything, once again, we couldn't install them because we didn't have the money to install the floodgates. So, we had the floodgates and they're not installed because they don't have the money, to install floodgates. And the other big problem is down neck, I'm also the co-enforcement officer, so I know the whole county, okay? I know a whole deal. I go up, I go over to Smith Island all the time. I saw the damage and, you know, and everything there. And the big problem down neck, which is, I don't know if you're familiar with Crisfield, but if you go down 413, it's on the left-hand side of where the mayor's office is and everything, and in fact, the mayor office, years ago, they used to have a big berm there around the perimeter and would stop all that water from coming in. Well, as years went by, the berm went down to where it's almost like a small road. And the county is given minimal permission to maintain that road, but they're not allowed to build the berm back up again. If they would berm the burn back up, it would save that whole lower, I mean, if you talk to anyone down there that actually knows the area, if- if all the regulations and everything would be dropped, and they'd be allowed to truck that soil in and make that berm again, they would save that whole lower end. And the thing that I don't understand is the environmentalists are so off the skew on us, because if we keep doing nothing, and it's encroaching more and more every year. I see it, the 18 years I've been, you know, active with this city. I- I see it coming further and further in, and I see areas that stay wet now, because the water's, you know, just coming on, you know, it's saturating in, because they're not properly maintaining that- that berm area. And what it's doing is, all these environmentalists are looking like, oh, you can't, there's a frog or whatever the hell's there, and, you know, you know, that's going to disrupt their ecosystem. But the big thing is, if they put that berm in, what they're doing is saving them. You know, I went to Poplar, I don't know if you've ever heard of Poplar Island. I visited that. You ever visit? You need to go. That's an experience of a lifetime because once they're done with it, you won't be able to go back. They're going to pull out of it. But they took nothing but soils and built that- built that island up. And they had so many, and- and everyone was against the environmentalists and everyone, but when- when you go back to it, they have so many species of birds and everything that came back that they never anticipated to come back. They even have deer on the island now that they don't even know how

the deer got over there. You know, so I mean, somebody has to calm down on all these avenues, whether it be the environmentalists, the extreme environmentalists I'm talking about, any common-sense ones, to see you may disrupt something here, but in the future, it's going to be greater for all of the environment. And you know, and the regulations are just killing everyone, from like, you know, from crabbing to even fishing. You know, they have, they're putting so many stupid regulations on the stripers and everything. You know, you're not allowed to kill some of these stripers, but you can- you could kill the breeders, but you can't kill- you can't the- the 18-inchers. So, the ones that are breeding, you're allowed to kill them, which doesn't make sense. But if you, you know, if you're any type of fishman, you know there are times you'll- you'll pull a striper out of there and there'll be nine to thirteen little crabs in it. So, they're saying we're destroying, you know, that the crabbers are destroying the crab, it's not. They're overpopulating these fish and they're not letting the balance of it go through and they are killing their own industries. You look at the oyster industries, you know, there are so many sections right now they have drones and everything to make somebody sure somebody doesn't drift into an area and they're leaving these- these oysters out there and the problem is they're overpopulating and they are dying because they're not their- they need to be harvested to keep the air, the water going and the whole nine yards to flush the system and what, you know, somebody. I don't know how they think that if you actually listen to oysterers, you know, the people that go for oystering and the people in the fishing industry that know- know that industry, you have to keep that population circulating so that it stays healthy, but what they're doing is they're letting these- you can't touch these oyster fields and they're actually killing the oysters by doing that.

Knorr: So, kind of touching on the kind of like the seafood or the oyster or the crab industry, we've talked to some people where they've talked about the rockfish or different, are kind of killing that industry. Would you say your opinion would be kind of the regulations and the over environmentalist of like trying to save things is what's been damaging those?

Konapelsky: Definitely, definitely, definitely. You know, they have I don't know how they come up with their, you know, every year it's, you know, the every year like flounder and everything, it's always going up in size, but when you go up in size you're going into the breeders, you know, so it- it's an oxymoron because you're killing what you're trying to what- what allows the species to move on, you're- you're allowing the deaths of that, and the- the younger ones are the ones that are killing the crabbing industry. There's no balance there, you know, and I don't know the answer to that. You know, I'm not a biologist, but somebody's doing something wrong somewhere that they're- they're- they're causing regulations that are hurting the thing next to it and not paying attention. They're worried about the one thing, but they're not looking at how it affects the whole ecosystem.

Knorr: Would you say if they could make some more of those, I guess, common sense regulations or rules, that maybe the industry could kind of boom, and there'd be influx in Crisfield again?

Konapelsky: Definitely, if you look at it, the regulations are so bad right now that it's hard to get a local crab, you know, you know, most of the crabs are being brought in from overseas. You know, Indonesia or whatever, you know, God knows their waters, you know, what- what they're like you know, but at the end of the day, you know, it's- it's more. It's cheaper for these retailers to buy overseas, because they don't have the regulations or anything. The only thing is they don't have as good a crap, honestly, because they're waters, I mean, they go to the restroom in the waters that they're pulling the stuff out of, you know? And they over-regulated it so bad that there- there are killing generations of families, generations of families that have done that. It's not profitable for them to do it anymore. You know, you used to have buy houses, buy boats, you don't have any of that in Crisfield anymore. You used to ice houses for them, nothing. You don't even have a seafood restaurant in Crisfield anymore, sad to say. [pauses]

Knorr: So, I guess going back to some of these flooding events, you mentioned that Sandy was kind of a nightmare. So, could you maybe speak more on your experiences with that?

Konapelsky: Well, no one expected that to happen. I was on the city council at the time and I'll never forget we were having- we had a meeting with the city council, we're talking there and no one, it was not supposed to be that big a deal and I'll never forget the night before Sandy hit. The Mayor and Mayor Purnell was there at the time came up to my house and I said, "Mayor, what do you think do I need to my car, whatever," and he said, "No, we're not gonna have anything." Well, let me tell you something, the world opened up to hell that night and it was horrible. I lost two rooms of my house, the front room and the back room. I had the fence next to my house. It's a three-foot-high fence, you didn't see it, it was gone, you know? And it we had, it- it hit so fast, so strong, and so violently, you know, I'll never forget I looked out, it was, God, I forget what time of night, and the Coast Guard came down and one of their, you know those boats that are like a pontoon boat and that they go through, they came through trying to take people out of the house and there were two older women that lived next to me at the time in they only had room for two more people and I had a boat pull up to my house, which is kind of weird. You know, you don't have boats pull up your house. And we had my wife and I said, "No, take the older women," and they took the older women and we looked and finally my wife and I looked at each other and we said good night to each other. And we didn't know what we were in store for when we woke up. It was that violent. It was horrible. So, we didn't even know what we were looking at through the night or if there would be anything left in the morning.

Knorr: Yeah, I mean, I guess what kind of, did you have to make major repairs to your homes that because of Sandy I guess like you said.

Konapelsky: Oh yeah, it's still not totally repaired, you know, I- I did the major stuff, but you know insurance didn't touch half of the damage and then the other problem you had was, you know, it came true to a lot of people. You didn't have the damage, you didn't see the damage till like eight, nine months afterwards because, you know, it like soaked into your walls or whatever and you didn't see the damage at first and then all of a sudden month later, once it has time to sit, you know, other problems pop into play and that's what happened there.

Knorr: I mean, you spoke to kind of your connection to the City of Crisfield and everything. Have you ever thought, or do you know anybody who's thought about relocating up north a little bit more or?

Konapelsky: There are some people that did it, but, and people ask me this all the time. They say, "Why don't you get out of there?" It's, you know, we wake up in the morning, we look at our back door and we see the bay, you know, and you know we- we have our dog, we walk up to the beach. You know, I walk, I know my neighbors. You know, if I go away or my- my wife and I are gone, our family, they watch our house. It's that type of community. I mean, it- it is a great community. And, you know, the thing is, in today's world, where do you move to? You know, the Midwest has their problems, God knows the south, you know, Florida has its issues with hurricanes and everything, you know, it's not like there's really, truly a state. Everyone's dealing with some type of weather conditions. I mean, you still have snow in areas coming through this weekend, a blizzard, which I think is insane. But, you know, it's, you know, the thing, is we're happy. And, you know, we just wherever we're going to be, we're going to deal with something, but at least we know the animal we're dealing with here; you know when to get out when not to get out. We've learned that, you know. We learned to- how to watch the tides, you know, and stuff like that so.

Ottey: So, has there been anyone else that's relocated like any of your neighbors, have they ever tried to relocate to other areas?

Konapelsky: I had, maybe, maybe two, for all the time, after Sandy, I would say there were probably two or three of direct neighbors around me that moved. But they stayed in the area, they just moved further inland. They like moved in either into Fruitland or they moved into, you know, like Princess Anne. They didn't go far, they just got away from the water.

Ottey: So, what kind of renovations do you see maybe some neighbors making to their homes? I know some people aren't able to also make.

Konapelsky: The big thing down here, the major renovation everyone needs is elevation. But the problem is, you know, it's like, if you take my house, I don't have an elaborate house, and if you look at the cost of my house and I had a price to have the house elevated, well, it's almost, it was \$185,000 to raise my house. And I still have an older home. Now, I had to put up \$85,000, the FEMA was going to put up the \$100,000. But even still, I would, number one, never get the

money out of the house, just with raising it up. The other thing is it's an older home. So, if I take that older home and raise it in the air, I don't know what kind of issues I'm going to have with that house, with the roof and everything, because when you go up six, eight feet, how close I am to the water. That air changes, the wind changes, so I could have a house that can't sustain the winds in that area, you know. So, we- we just monetarily and everything, it just wasn't worth it to do anything. But if you could say what- what's the biggest change that should happen in Crisfield is one they should, they- they need to put a better drainage system in. You know, they are talking about which I think is so stupid, but I'm not the sharpest tool in the shed where FEMA was going to come in and they were there, their theory was, raise the street three to five inches, three to five feet, you know, in Crisfield area and everyone's gone hold on. I was listening. You know, I'm like, "Are you guys bored again idiots? You know, because if you raise my street three to five feet," and they said, "Well, they're gonna curve it." I said, "So what am I gonna do, drive on an angle down the street"? and I said, "The problem you're gonna have is unless you put super-deluxe drainage in first and then put the street like that and all that's gonna- my- my house is gonna become a bowl. So, all that runoff. I'm not only gonna deal with the tide, I'm gonna deal with all the major runoff from the road system and like right now if this versus is flat throughout the neighborhood, it's going to pour in and it's going to have nowhere to go. It's gonna cup right around my house, they'll destroy my house!" But the engineers knew better than I did with FEMA and thank God, it, you know, that project stopped because of the fund-cutting right now. Maybe somebody will like actually take a look at that better, you know, but I don't understand, you know. I don't know how you would want to raise that street without fixing the drainage first. You know, the drainage is from the 30s, you know, and most of it's collapsed, we found out.

Knorr: Yeah, I think, kind of doing some other interviews, we've heard a lot about maybe individual projects or bigger projects that don't actually help the city, whereas it might just help one individual sometimes.

Konapelsky: Exactly.

Knorr: And it kind of displaces it on everybody else's kind of.

Konapelsky: Mm-hmm.

Knorr: Would you say that might be a little bit of an issue, like individuals raising homes or raising their yards and everything, or raising the road where then it's like, well, you're just displacing it onto other people?

Konapelsky: Well, they have to be careful because now the house next to me, her house was raised by the Mennonites and she went up an insane amount. It's like eight feet in the air, which is like, you know, I'm at the base flood elevation, the legal base flood elevation now, so she's like 8 feet above it. And it's insane, it looks, and she's an older person too, when she has two flights of steps to go up all the time to get in the house, you know, and I lost the original question there.

Knorr: I was just saying the way, would you say that's maybe a little bit of an issue if individuals think like that?

Konapelsky: Oh, okay, but they graded her house and it didn't affect mine all that much, it affect me a bit. I have some- I have minimal offload now. I- I've never had a big flood since she did that, so I'm still watching to see the effect of that, because I brought that out to them that they're bringing all that fill and it's gonna shoot over to my side. I haven't had a noticeable thing, but I haven't had an event for me to look at that point. The only thing that I- I can't figure out is all these handful of homes that are going up in the air, if it get to- if it ever got to the point where it took my whole house out, because my two-house levels that I- that I lost in the house were that my main house is higher than that. So, it didn't touch the main, it came up to the main house, but it didn't go into the house. But if we ever get an event worse than Sandy and my house goes and everyone else in the neighborhood. What good is it to those people, the handful, like there's three on my street that had their house raised, so they could sit there and say, "Whoopie, our house survived!" But they'll have nothing left, there won't be any infrastructure. It'll be gone, they won't have any neighbors, they'll be gone. So, you're gonna have a handful, it's gonna be like Holland Island, you know, you're to live on your own island.

Knorr: Oh, you know, you spoke to kind of like, learning to kind of recognize the tides and everything. How do you personally prepare for flooding or severe, like weather storms now?

Konapelsky: Well, the- the first thing we do is that when I look at the tides, most of the tides are not tides that I'm worried about that are coming in the house, but they surround my house. You know, they'll- they'll come up a good foot around my whole house. So I make sure that I- we have a crap car, a jeep, that we keep for emergencies that I don't care if I lose it because I lost my cars in Sandy and our other car, a good car, that I get to high grounds instantly. That's the first thing we do is make sure we have the vehicle out of there and the other thing is we just make sure we have like everything set up. We're like, if we're stuck in a house, we have kind of like a survival system set up as to what we need for everything. So, if the electricity goes down, I have backup lights and everything what we, if- if the heat goes out, I have propane heaters for us, if- if- if we lose that stuff, you know, I'll have the grill set up, the charcoal grill. So, you know, stuff to just survive. And then we hold, and then actually, to be honest with our neighbors, we all touch base with each other beforehand. We ask, "Do you have enough water? Do you have no food?" and ultimately, if- if the worst happened, we were sitting there for a couple of days, if somebody needed something, we would just walk it over to them. You know, I mean, you know, so it's not only- it's not only individually, it is that my whole street gets ready with each other. And we're all prepared because the one problem we have when people come down my street, even when it's closed off, you have people that love to joyride. Our- our area floods first and it's the last to not be flooded. So, people like driving through that stuff. But what they don't understand is when they drive through that, even with the road closed off, when they do that wake, it pushes the water into our house. And, you know, and so our neighbors line up and we

take pictures now and send it to the police, you know, because they just, these guys with these tall trucks, they just blow through and they don't understand it's damaging to our house, you know. God bless them, I don't care if they're having fun, but they're hurting the homes around them, you know, so our, I mean, our whole street gets involved in everything. You know, but you know, the- the big thing is it just like anywhere, you make sure you have enough food. You make- you have not can goods, water I- I'm not too concerned about that, you know, because, you know, we keep plastic bottled water so long before it leaches in, you know, so these people that like get three years supplies, it only lasts six months, then you have been bleaching problems so the plastic into it so, you know, that that never made sense to me, but we- it's- it's common sense stuff. And then, you know, the first time when Sandy hit, we took everything, like pictures, that we loaded up a trailer. And then now we realize this stuff doesn't matter if we lose this shit. We- we decide what we really need, and, you know, that's pretty much it. And if we get out in that situation, and if we lost everything, we would miss it, but we- we would be alive, you know?

Ottey: Yeah, so hearing some of those stories, especially about the one with the trucks driving through and making kind of the wake a lot worse, it's- it's really, this isn't a question, but I just find it really interesting that FEMA was trying to do that project where they would raise the streets and then, you know, if you've got people driving through the trucks, it is just going to make that so much- more worse. So, it's like, no, I totally understand where you're coming from with that common sense stuff, you know.

Konapelsky: It's, you know, like I'm scratching my head on this thing and- and they make it sound so good and everything, but like if you put on paper, I wanted to do a model and, you know, I just didn't have the time to enact what they were going to do and put a little, and put a toy truck and have it run down to show them, oh, you're- you're- you're gonna cause damage to every one of these homes on all these streets that you do this on. You know, right now the waterway in the middle, going down 413 in Crisfield, you have the dual highway, the dual highway, and you have that ditch area in the middle. I mean that, you know, the pumps are always going down on that. The last rain we had filled that huge ditch up and it was going into the waterways. So, you know, the big thing is, even if you have something in place, the big problem is if you're dealing with mechanicals. You can't always rely on those mechanical pumps, you know?

Knorr: So, you kind of spoke about like the FEMA project kind of concerns you definitely a little bit. Are there any projects that are being worked on that kind of excite you thought about what's going on?

Konapelsky: But I've heard this for years that we supposedly have the money to put in a new-new sewer lines and everything, but I've heard that for over 12 years that we have the money, we had the money. I- I would just love to see somebody do something, you know? I heard that the engineers have to- have to do the drawings and everything. Well, that was seven years ago. I

don't know how many pencils they need to do seven years of drawings, but, you know, you know, we supposedly have the money to do the infrastructure, it's just not being done. So, I don't- I don't know who's to blame for that, or the reason for that. Because to be honest with you, I was a critical area commissioner for nine years, I was the city councilman for eight years, and I got sick of politics. Because I got so sick of the bullshit, the stupidity, and the lack of anything getting done. I just couldn't, I was beating my head against the wall. [pauses]

Ottey: So, there's not really many projects from the city that they're really working on that kind of excite you?

Konapelsky: That's all my knowledge at this point. I hear a lot of talk, but, you know, talk is cheap to me. I don't pay attention to talk anymore. You know, until it comes to the plate where they say, we're going to start doing this in two months. So, you know, it could be my complacency, too, that I don't know a lot of the stuff that they're planning, but I've heard plans for so many years and absolutely nothing happened. Nothing.

Knorr: What would you say your opinion kind of has been with the city council of state like regarding the issue of like flooding and that kind of stuff?

Konapelsky: They show concern, you know, the thing is, our- our recent mayor had a lot of attention brought to it and, you know, they had FEMA come down and, you know, there was a lot activity and swirl around and everything, that's gone, you know, it had its five minutes of fame, now it's nothing again, which is generally and I sign and I sound, not nice about this, but they have the best of intentions. All the mayors, though, every administration has the best of intentions. The only thing is, it's like they throw it out there, there's little fluff, and then it's done. So, there's never any follow-up, there's never any- you never see- you never see anything come to fruition.

Knorr: Would you say thought that the- the voice of the like yourself and other citizens is like at least valued or being input?

Konapelsky: To a degree, to a degree. I- I still have to come back to, you know, like when you look at, you know, with the city with- with infrastructure and stuff, they're always talking about it. I- I don't see any movement on any avenue there, but it, I'm gonna go back to like, you know, the- the waterways. You know, you have the crabbers speak out, you know, and everyone else and it falls on the deaf ear kinda. You know, you can go down to- you can go down Fairmont Road and look out and there's a barge there where they're throwing concrete and stuff into water, waste foils from other states. They tried to stop that and nothing happened but, you know, you'll see the barge and all this bullshit coming in and it still gets getting dumped in the waterways down there. The big problem is the boaters are saying like when it was deep waters for them to run in, now they have to be careful because they're running in 8 feet of water in sections, you know, and it's, we're- we're almost. The biggest thing I think would the Eastern Shore is to get

away from Maryland as a whole and separate and become their own entity, because we became the playground of the other side of the bridge and they don't and I think they- it's the regulations that are set up, like take for example the critical area, okay. If you build- if you build something, you have to do so many- so many trees for planting and everything for arbitration. Well, you know, all of these rules come out of Annapolis, and it's fine. When you look at Bethesda and all these other big places, Cambridge, they're built in already. So, if they put a little addition on, they have to put one tree in, you know, or a little shrubbery. Down in Somerset County, you have a lot of farm acreage down here and everything. So, if you have farmer that wants to put a house in, let's say he has 50 acres and he wants to put, to split off an acre, he has to do planting that is so off skew because of the size, it goes off the size of the land. So, if you have this little tiny place, you know, you're putting one, he's got to put 50 or 60 in. It's- the regulations are, they're not there evenly, you know, they are not based evenly. You know, it's easy to change something where it affects you just a little bit. You know, you know, because they're so confined with their space across the bridge. Over here it's vast, so it affects you tenfold. You know, but that's government. I'm not anti-government, I'm just anti-regulations. They over-regulate it themselves in every avenue. And I see it down here, they're killing every industry, and it's- it's just the regulations, people don't even want to do stuff today just because they don't want to go through all the hoops you have to go through to try to do something.

Ottey: Yeah, so it kind of seems like there's a very large disconnect between maybe not city government and Crisfield residents, but like larger government bodies and then the Crisfield residents.

Konapelsky: Oh yeah, definitely, definitely. [pauses]

Ottey: I think we might want to transition here into some other topics, but if you had something on that topic, you can go ahead.

Knorr: No, I was gonna change the subject.

Ottey: So, I guess I kind of want to bring up maybe like raising a family, or how- how- how is the youth kind of, you know, maybe what are they doing about this- this whole situation in Crisfield, or what are the even doing in Crisfield to begin with?

Konapelsky: By, I'm not understanding the question.

Ottey: So, it's kind of just what's the role of the youth in Crisfield nowadays. This isn't really relating to the flooding, but how has the youth kind of changed?

Konapelsky: Well, the youth has changed pretty much on the whole, like the rest of the country did there. You know, my wife's a teacher in a grade school in Crisfield and the children are a lot more disrespectful. They're a lot, a lot angrier, violent, and that comes back to two major things.

It's lack of family home life, and having no parents. I mean, you know, having split parents. And it's just the attitude of people today. It's a me, it's a mean world. And, you know. It- it's- it's changed, you know. I'm 65, gentlemen, you know I've seen a lot of changes, and I'm glad I don't have kids today. You know, with the stuff my wife has to go through, it's not nice. You know? But on the, you know, on the flip of the coin, like I go back to the beach, I do see more families now sitting up there as a whole and enjoying. They're families together, which is nice, but you know, around me there aren't many small children. You know, but more of what's happening in my neighborhood is there are people around my age, a little younger, and we have family coming down to visit, staying with us, and our grandchildren are coming down. So, you know, we're kind of like the surrogate area to go to get away for a little bit.

Knorr: Sometimes when people also kind of like speak on the youth of Crisfield, they've seen a trend of, yeah, like I'm sure maybe your wife as a teacher has seen she's probably younger, but once they graduate high school, they're just out of there like they haven't been. Do you see that as like an issue, maybe like reinvesting and kind of trying to get some of the youth to stay or trying to get that connection that you feel?

Konapelsky: That sounds great, but I don't know how you would do that, because the- the problem is, it- that would be great, you have to have a catalyst for that, and there is no catalyst, there is no business in our area. There's no, the industries are dying. I mean, who wants to, you know, even the ones that are left, like, you know, no disparaging them because it is- it's a- any field if you're working is, I respect anyone that's working. But even like, like your, your dream isn't to come back and be an oyster shucker, you know? Or sit in there and watch, you know, waiting for the soft-shell crabs to smelt and everything, you know, so. And there's no restaurants, you know, for them to work- to work as waiters and waitress. Years ago, when I came down here, it was like a mini-Cape May, you know, and we had hour lines to get in the restaurants. That's all gone away. I don't know what caused that, you know, but it's just all gone. So even the kids don't even have summer jobs. Because if you look at it, the world's so different today. The Food Lion, where you used to have kids there, you still have kids there. But most people are taking jobs, they're older people, just to survive, you know, monetarily because there is nothing here. It's not like, you know, Fruitland, we a lot of businesses, you know, Pocomoke, you have a lot of businesses, you can go to restaurants, etc. And there's literally, you know, I don't know how you could, what to invest in for kids to stay in Crisfield. You'd have to start something from scratch. There's nothing to put money into to build it at this point.

Knorr: Would you say though that you're- would you classify yourself as hopeful for the City of Crisfield though? Like in the next 20 years, do you think that?

Konapelsky: I think- I think it could be a great place. I think it's on a scary hinge right now to see what directions it's going to go, whether they are going to implement and push stuff. You know, like, for example, there's it- there's a lot of restaurants down in Crisfield, prime- prime

areas that were sold and they've been kept vacant by the same builder. And he took these two major restaurants that I know of and he's done nothing with them. I think the city has to implement something where you have to, I don't know why he even bought the places but he's stopping anyone from being able to put a restaurant in it again. There were actually two active restaurants in the one building. You know, I- I- I would hope that, I think, the city, if they could push something that- that you have to open a business within so long, I don't know how you could legally work anything like that, but to buy a business to just hold, I think they're holding onto it as an investment I think because of the area on it, but they were the investment we were hoping that they, we were looking to them for the investor when they bought it to start a place to build off of. So, you know, it- it's actually for me, I think the biggest thing with the newest people coming into our area. I think it's- it's becoming a- like a retirement area and it- it's. But that's kind of scary because like right behind me is Small Boat Harbor, you know, every morning, you know, you- it's like an alarm clock, you can tell that the crab boats going out when oyster season or whatever, you know, what it's really cool, you know, like five in the morning those boats are starting up and they're going out and, you know, you see them come back and everything, but that industry's dying so, you know, I don't know what's going to happen once those families are gone, you know, and you don't have that carrying forth anymore. The people coming down are just like, you know, they're the retirees for the most part or it's a second home where they're going to retire to. And I think more or less, it- it's just gonna become a quiet community. I don't think it's gonna become, I don't think, I'd be shocked if Crisfield came back as a robust, you know, commercialized industrialized area. I don't see that happening.

Ottey: So just to remind us on time, we are about to hit 50 minutes here, but I guess we just maybe have a couple of questions to end off here.

Konapelsky: It can go as long as you want. I don't care.

Ottey: Yeah. So, I guess, would- would you recommend Crisfield as a- as a place to live? I know you probably recommend it more to retirees, but.

Konapelsky: I would. I would recommend it as a peaceful, if you want a peaceful place for the most part, yes. If you're looking for an Ocean City or a Cape May, no, no. You know, it's more or less you have to, if you want to slow down in life and then just enjoy life. You know, it's like my- my wife walks the dog, you know, every morning she walks up the street and she puts pictures on Facebook and everything because right here, you know, there were a flock of baby heron, you know, that I have deer that come into my backyard. I have an acre and a half in the back that's just open. And we have deer, I mean, the nature that we see, the blue herons, and you know, it's just a peaceful place to come to, you know. Every morning, you know, when she's walking, there's at least six or seven other people walking at that time, all ages. You know, and everyone says good morning to each other, you know, and it's- it's- it's- it's different pace down here, it's a different pace. For, you know, younger kids, there's nothing here. Zero, nothing. You

know, other than if you like kayaking or if you liked boating or crabbing, you know, if you're into the water sports, it's phenomenal, fabulous. But outside of the water sports, it- it's not like you have any clubs or anything like that to go to.

Knorr: Through some of the people that we've been interviewing, both kind of older and younger, there's been a little bit of a split between, like, you know, you're saying like a nice getaway quiet place and then a place of people that are still a little more hopeful for that- that robust kind of boom. Would you say that it leans one way or the other for you or like there could be maybe a little but more investment for the youth and like a little bit more of a happy medium or?

Konapelsky: I actually don't see that there's any, I- I can't see investing in the youth other than their education. You know, I think that's the best we could help them is education-wise, which I think is failing. The whole system's failing in Somerset County right now. But outside of that, I- I don't know, I- I don't know the direction to say that we could put money into to help the youth. I mean, you know, there's, we don't have like major basketball courts down here. We don't have- we don't have tennis courts, you know, I mean a couple on four, you know, up 413, but it's nothing, you know, like in Crisfield itself. There's, to start a youth organization doing anything, I just don't see it happening, you know, I really don't. I mean, the kids' mindsets aren't set like that down there. You know, I- I don't know, you know, I don't know the direction you could do other than if it was to bus them up to other areas to do stuff. You know, like maybe; you know, if you have a program to get them out of Crisfield, you know, to go up to like Fruitland to Kings and go to the sports center there or something like that, you know.

Knorr: So, you sort of see the future as like that quiet getaway for it.

Konapelsky: Yeah, I mean the one thing that I do see growing every year is the (plan air?), you know the arts and crafts type thing, and they have a lot more artists coming down here and they're- they're- they're- I can see that, I see that growing. You know, more and more, the art- art, whether it's sculpturing or- or painting or whatever, that's growing down here. They have a good- they have good base on that, that they can work off of. And, you know, that could be something that could orchestrate everything else, because if they have an arts district that's really strong in place, then you're going to have the little cafes show up. You know, that, you know, you want to sit there and have a cappuccino or whatever, you know, and, you know. That could bring the flavor back in the little shops. That I could see happening, industry I can't, and for I wish I had an answer for the youth. I- I- I- I don't see a path, at least right now, because I don't even know what you could offer them here. We don't even have the space to offer anything.

Knorr: Well, it sounds like there is like, you know, like you said, the arts kind of there is some potential there for Crisfield to grow.

Konapelsky: Oh yeah, definitely, but not in the direction it was in the past. They're going to have to reinvent themselves to like, almost like the St. Michael's, you know. They're gonna have to gear towards the St. Michael's environment.

Knorr: I've heard that a few people have actually, that's like the comparison that they've said. St. Michael's is a similar, like just down a dead-end road where you gotta get people to wanna go there.

Konapelsky: Yeah, yeah.

Ottey: Kind of goes back to what- what you were saying about like the whole catalyst thing. Like, you know, there's got to be something there to kick off some other things. Like if you get more local arts and stuff like that, or maybe people, maybe artists from outside of Crisfield coming in, you know, spark like cafes popping up and other things like that.

Konapelsky: Yeah.

Ottey: But maybe it's just going in a different direction than what Crisfield used to be.

Konapelsky: That's what- that's what I see happening. You know, I don't see like big restaurants and everything else. I could see- I could see that growing with little like- like little spots opening up to start building it. It's like Chincoteague, too, if you go down Main Street and shit, something like that. [pauses]

Knorr: One question we didn't touch on that I kind of wanted to ask about was do you think that in Crisfield like kind of climate change or the flooding is something that is actively discussed and planned for like amongst the community or?

Konapelsky: Actually, you wouldn't have found this truth. Most of the people at Crisfield think that climate change is bullshit and a lot of it is, it's always been this way, like the old timers, 90-year-olds, the thing is they said, well, we used to do this to stop that and that's not there anymore. So, what do you expect? You know, but you know, everything goes in, everything, goes in cycles. I- I don't- I don't set myself up for climate change, you know, I don't know what I could do to set myself up for climate change to be honest with you. You know, and I'm not going to live in fear, you know. I'm just dealing with, you know, you know, you look at all, there's so many areas throughout the Midwest and everywhere. They're getting- they're getting temperature drops and everything. You can say it's climate change, it doesn't matter, the big deal is, you know, do you gear for that in the future if it doesn't happen for another fifty, sixty years, you know, God forbid, you know, 2012 is when Sandy hit. I haven't had anything that bad since, God willing, I hope to God I never go through that again or anything worse, you know. But at the end of the day, you can't- you can't prepare yourself enough for something like Sandy or something like that hitting. Because if we have winds like that, you know, say my house was raised, I might

have been okay on the ground level with the- with the water, but the winds, because I'm up in the air higher, could have taken my roof off. So, you know, it's like, I throw it at God's hands, you know, just let it there. This probably isn't what you guys want to hear, but.

Ottey: Oh no, we want to hear everything, everything is good.

Knorr: Yeah, I mean, but that's what the people's opinion about like how it.

Ottey: Yeah, I don't have any more follow-up questions. Just one more question probably we can end it on. So, so there are any words of wisdom or advice that you'd maybe want to share for the future generations of Crisfield or maybe current residents of Crisfield.

Konapelsky: Don't let go. And I know that a lot of the kids move away. Eventually, they move back. But the big thing is, don't let go, because life's a struggle. No matter where you go in life, life's struggle. And you know, there are a lot of places around here where you- where you can get an education or elsewhere and come back and bring that knowledge back. You know, if you were born and raised in this area, you know better than I do what- what Crisfield needs. Use the knowledge you gain and see if you could come up with an answer. You know, but the big thing is, don't just walk away from this area, because it's too important in life. You know, and just hold, and the big thing is hold on to your family values. Don't let them go. You know, because a lot of these people, these kids, you know, in- in your college, they have the values. You know, they're not the lost generation where, you know, no one believes in parents or anything else or even self-respect anymore. You know, these, you know, just what- what's in your heart, you know? Make sure you hold on to it. Don't let it all go. Don't forget where you came from.

Knorr: I think if there's anything else you'd like to say like this will be stored in the Nabb Center and everything.

Konapelsky: Now the only thing I have to say is I'm going to tell you what my kids say. Stop lecturing me, Dad.

Knorr: All right, well, thank you.

Konapelsky: It was a pleasure, gentlemen.

[Transcript ends]